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Militzer

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[54] **PORTABLE SECTIONAL POLE AND ATTACHING CONNECTORS**

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[51] **Int. Cl.**⁷ **F16M 13/00**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **248/159**; 248/125.8; 248/230.8

[58] **Field of Search** 248/159, 125.1, 248/125.3, 125.8, 230.8, 228.8, 218.4, 230.1; 211/86.01, 171, 172, 173

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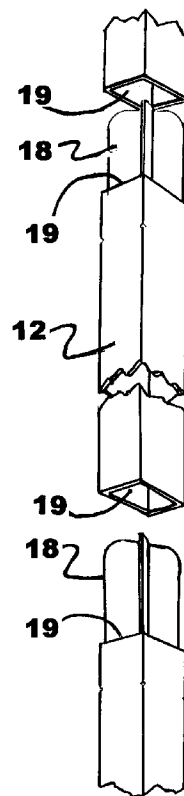
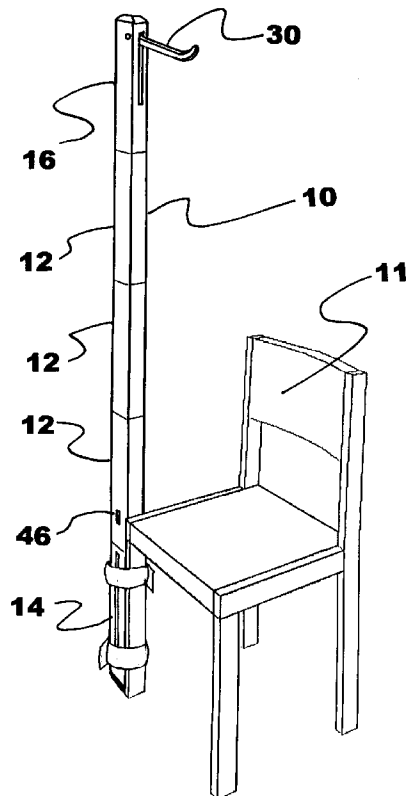
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A pole connector and a detachable sectional pole wherein the pole connector, at one end, is securely insertable into one end of a section of the pole, while another end of the connector defines a set of at least three fins protruding from that pole section for removably attaching to a mouth of another pole section. The pole connector may be made of two to four or more segments. The sectional pole has more than one section, each with a pole connector securably inserted into one end with the other end being a mouth adapted to removably connect to a pole connector protruding from another pole section. The sectional pole has a support member adapted to attach to an external object, maintain approximate vertical stability, and protect the external object from damage while so attached. The sectional pole also has one or more holding members which are either concealable within the sectional pole or removable from the sectional pole and which are adapted to hold external objects thereon.

16 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



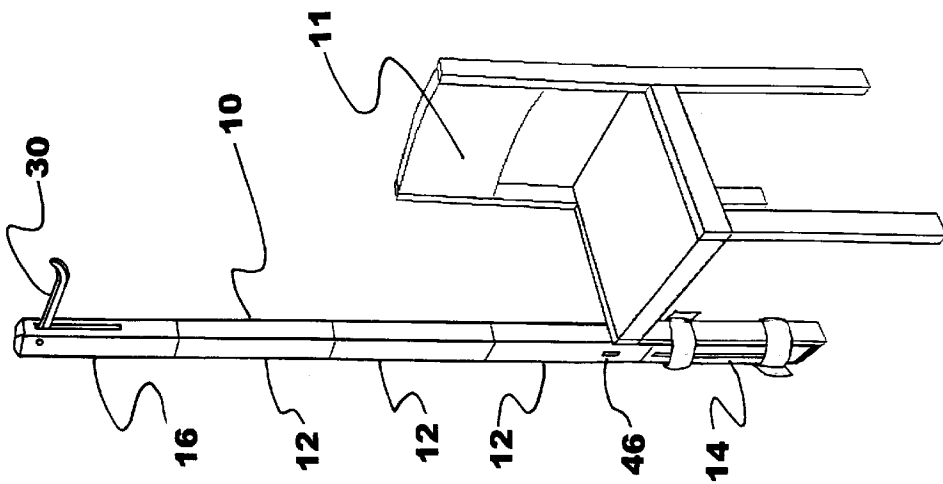


FIGURE 1

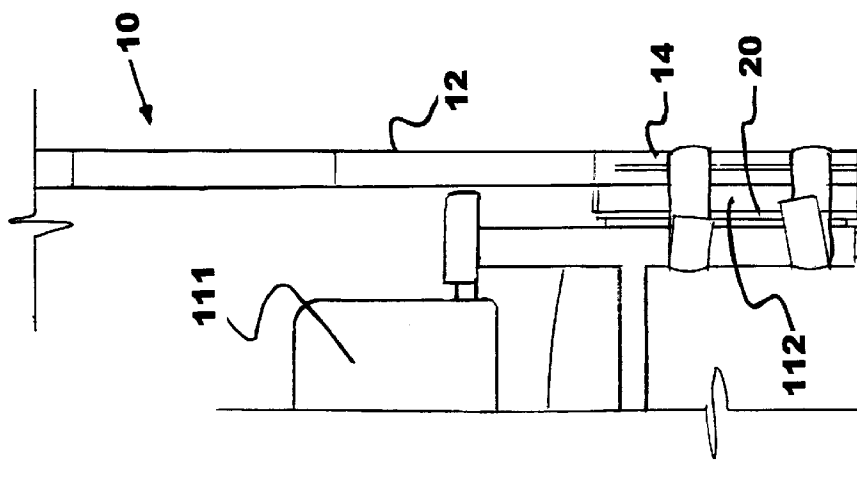


FIGURE 2

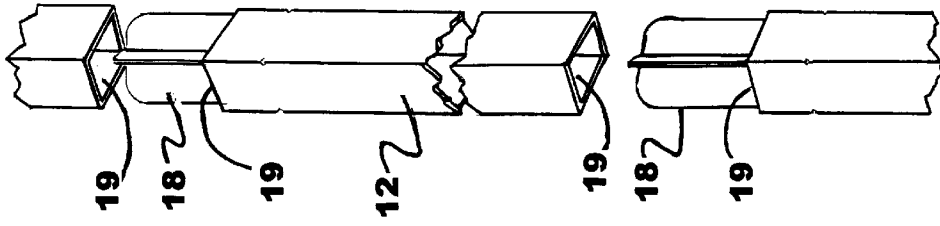


FIGURE 3

FIGURE 5

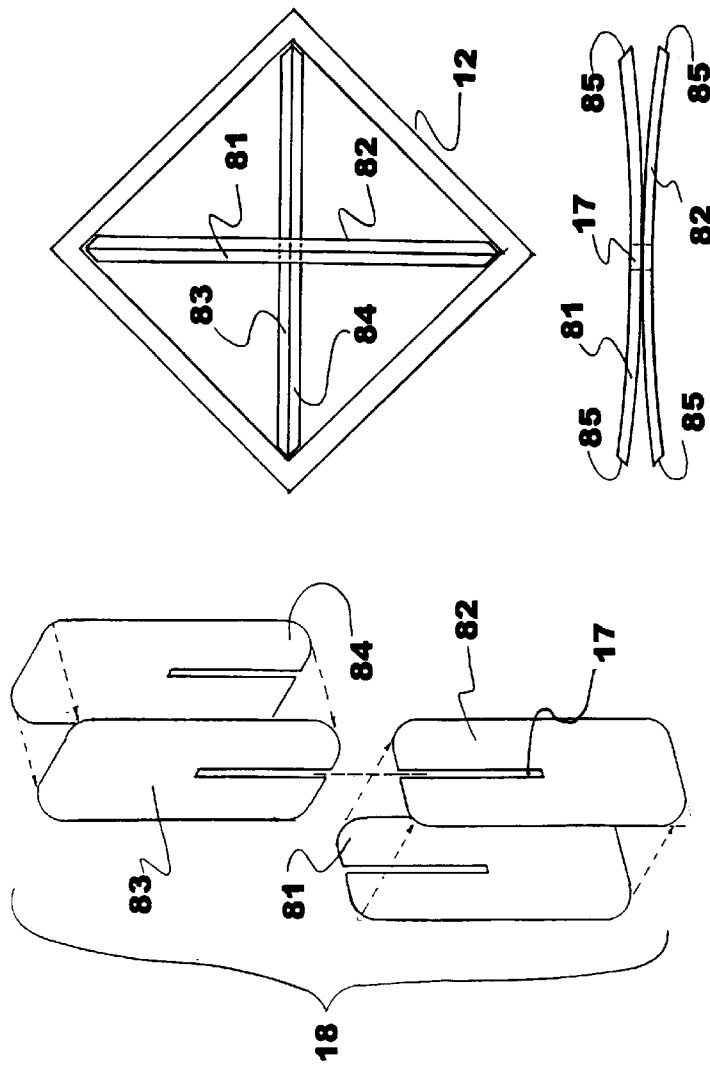


FIGURE 6

FIGURE 4

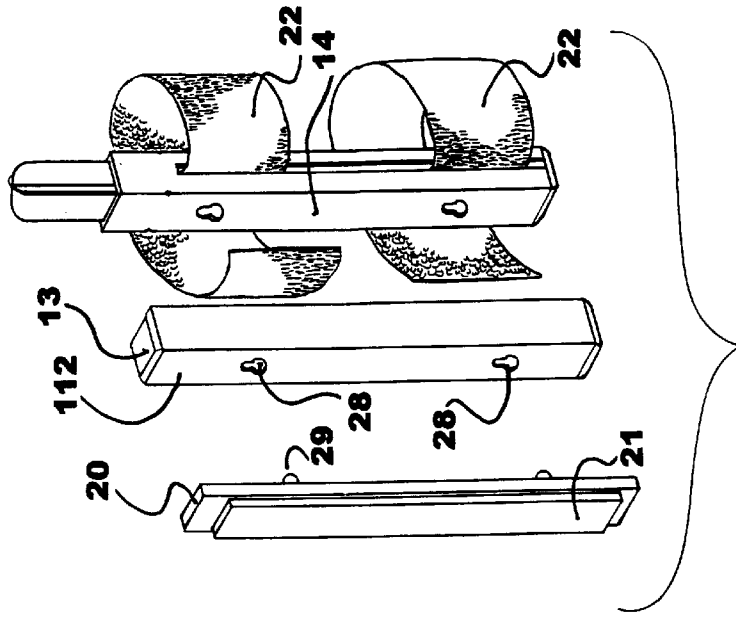


FIGURE 7

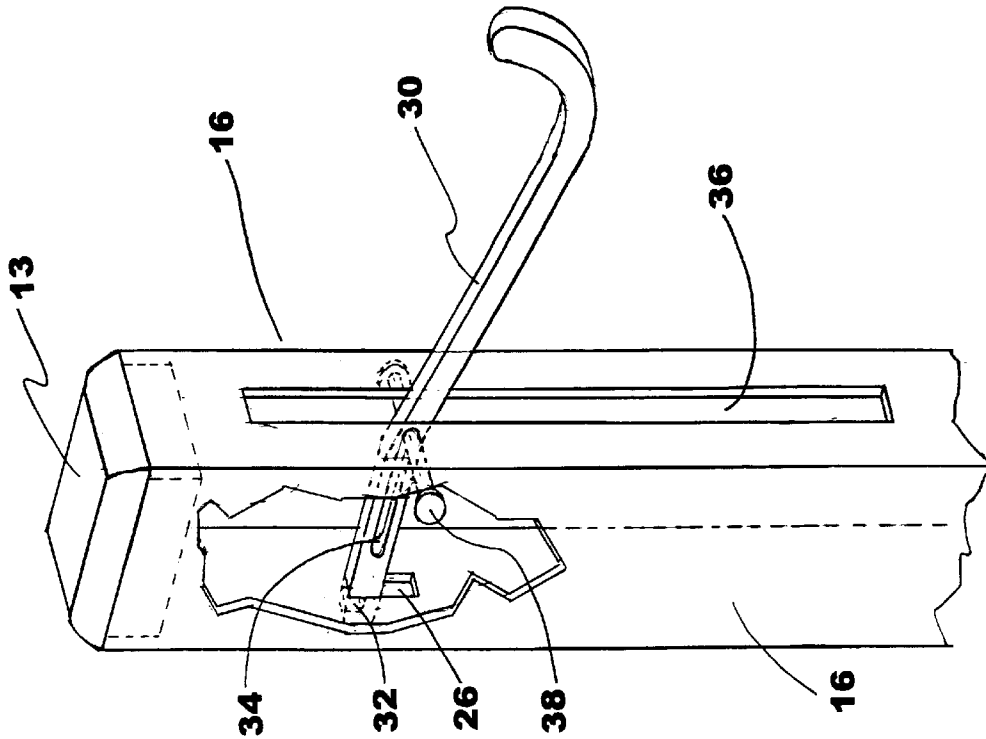


FIGURE 10

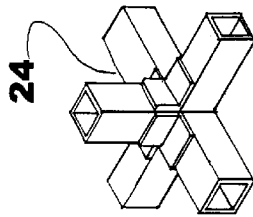


FIGURE 9

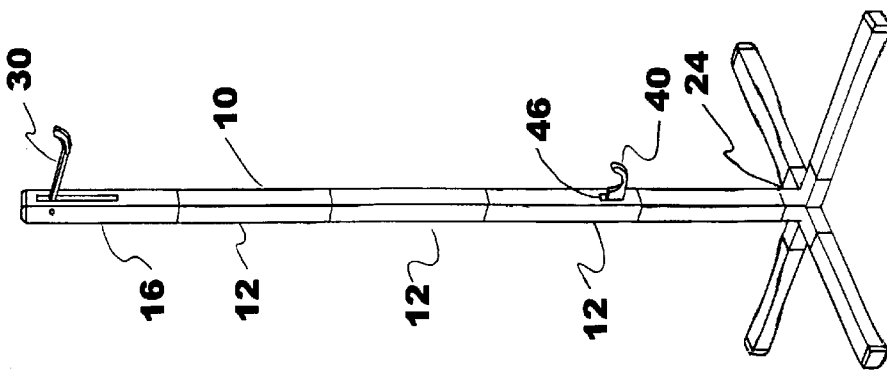


FIGURE 8

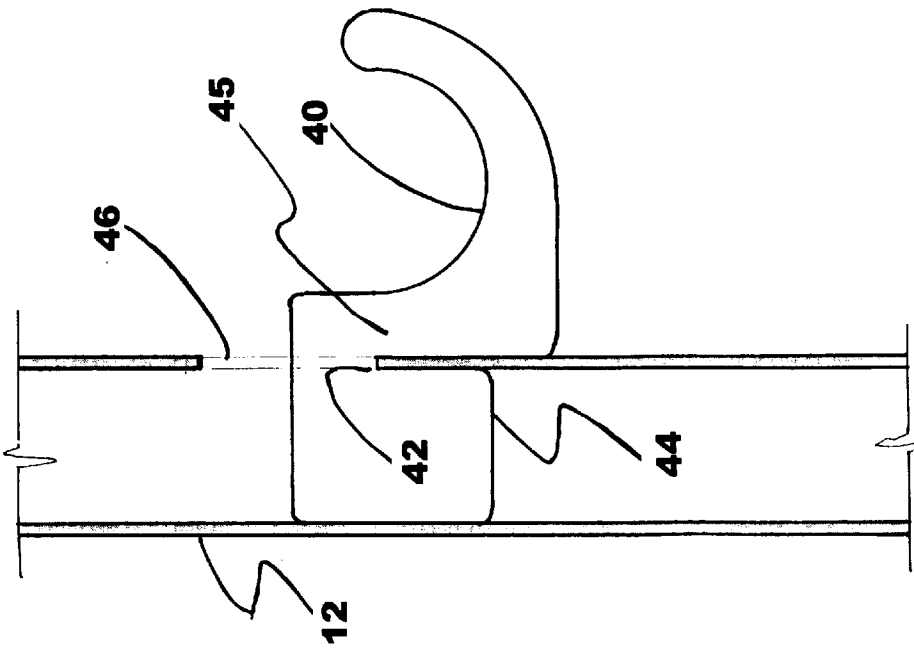


FIGURE 11

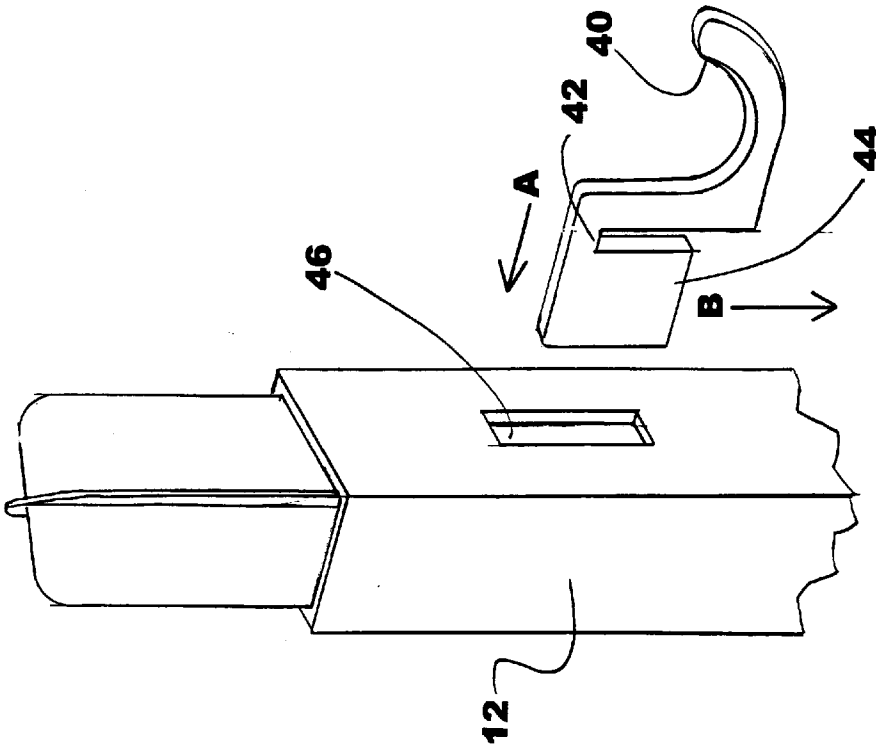


FIGURE 12

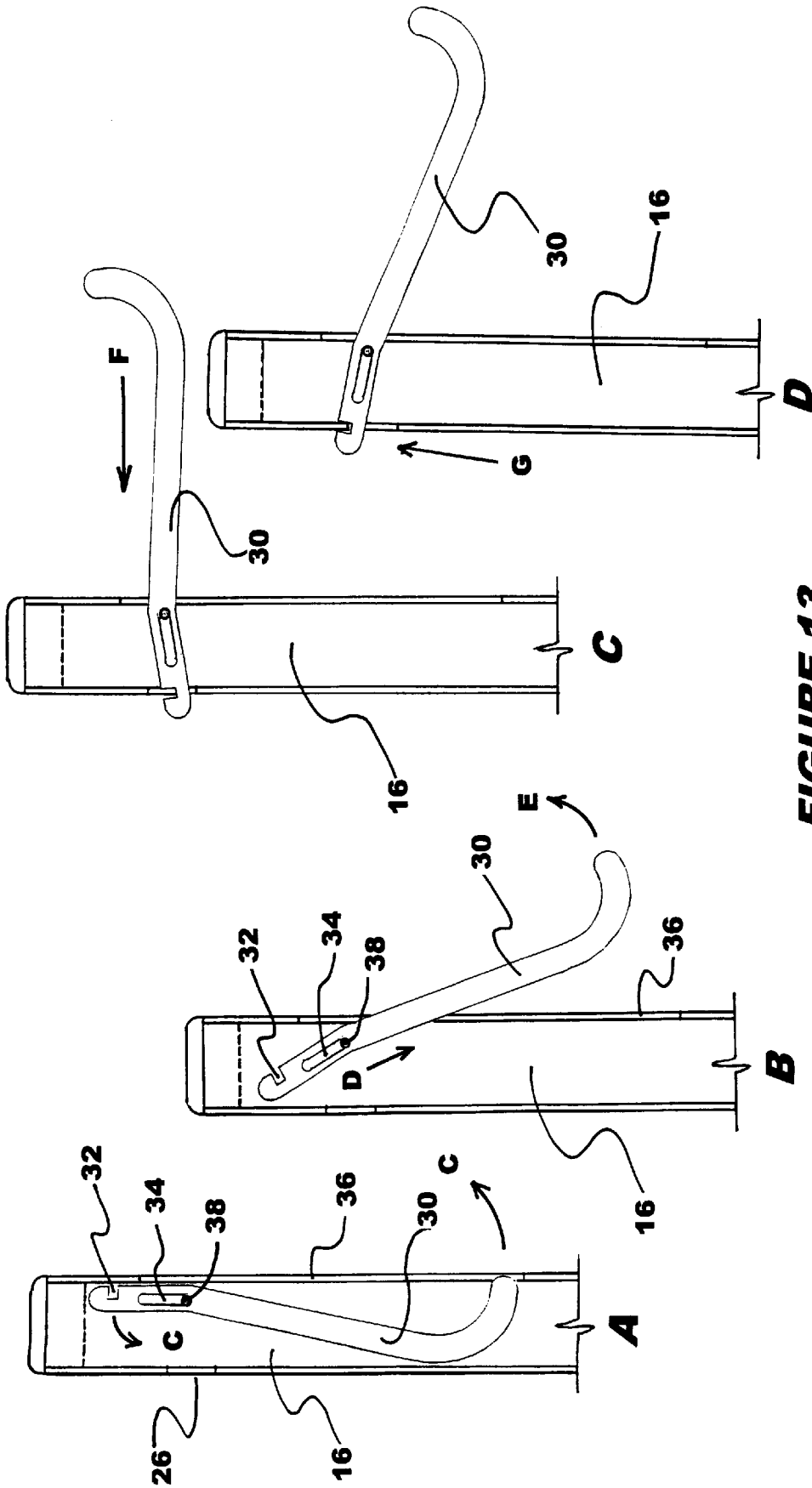


FIGURE 13

PORTABLE SECTIONAL POLE AND ATTACHING CONNECTORS

CROSS REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

Not applicable

STATEMENT REGARDING FEDERALLY-SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This present invention relates to a portable sectional pole and its means of connection and, more particularly, to a portable sectional pole having one or more holding members adapted to support containers for administering substances into a user's body and for collecting substances eliminated from a user's body. The holding members are integral to the sectional pole and may be removable or concealable thereby further facilitating the portability of the pole. In addition, the sectional pole is self-supporting in that it is adapted to support itself or use any suitable, yet commonplace, external structure for support thereby enhancing its versatility.

Cost of medical has risen over the years and continues to rise. More and more emphasis is being placed on performing necessary treatment in a clinical setting or a hospital and then only releasing a patient after a patient's condition has reasonably stabilized. Post-hospitalization care in many cases is now performed by the patient or by third parties; be they family, friends, or paid professionals. Such post-hospitalization and post-treatment care may require intravenous feeding, intravenous administration of medications, and other forms of catheterization for introduction of substances into one's body (infusion therapy) or for the elimination of substances from one's body; such as, but not limited to, eliminations involved in perineal dialysis treatment.

Depending on the regimen involved, such administration can adversely affect one's lifestyle and dramatically inhibit one's quality of life. To administer to these needs, generally a device must be capable of holding and supporting a bag or suitable container. This bag or container either contains the substance to be administered to the user or is an empty receptacle for receiving expelled substances from the user. Many such devices currently exist in a variety of forms for use either the clinical setting or at home or other non-clinical setting. Some such devices are found in U.S. Pat. No. 4,511,157 issued to Wilt on Apr. 16, 1985; in U.S. Pat. No. 4,541,596 issued to Price on Sept. 17, 1985; in U.S. Pat. No. 4,744,536 issued to Bancalari on May 17, 1988; in U.S. Pat. No. 5,009,442 issued to Schneider on Apr. 23, 1991; in U.S. Pat. No. 5,135,191 issued to Schmuhl on Aug. 4, 1992; in U.S. Pat. No. 5,188,323 issued to David on Feb. 23, 1993; in U.S. Pat. No. 5,337,992 issued to Pryor on Aug. 16, 1994; and in U.S. Pat. No. 5,374,074 issued to Smith on Dec. 20, 1994. All these devices, alone or in combination, are well-suited for their intended purpose. Some, however, are extremely complex and difficult to use. Some require an additional component which itself is complex, such as a wheelchair or gurney for example, for proper use. Some are portable, some are collapsible, some are relatively easy to use. None, however, incorporates all the features necessary for relatively unobtrusive use and ease of use outside a clinical setting while simultaneously being portable, flexible, and multi-faceted as is the present invention.

Accordingly, several objects and advantages of my invention are to:

- a. provide unique but simple and sturdy connectors to connect together sections of sectional poles to create poles of varying sizes;
- b. provide a completely portable light-weight sectional pole which is easy to conceal, easy to transport, easy to assemble, and easy to use anywhere;
- c. provide holding members on a portable pole which are capable of supporting a variety of containers for use and are concealable within or detachable from the portable pole when the portable pole is broken down;
- d. provide for a variety of settings and locations on a support pole for holding containers necessary for tending to a user's health care needs;
- e. provide a support pole which can adapt to and be supported by external objects having irregular configurations;
- f. provide a support pole which, when attached to an external object, protects and does not damage the external object; and
- g. provide an inexpensive, fully functional, versatile, and relatively unobtrusive support pole for a user to administer to that user's health care needs in virtually any setting.

The foregoing has outlined some of the more pertinent objects of the present invention. These objects should be construed to be merely illustrative of some of the more prominent features and applications of the intended invention. Many other beneficial results can be attained by applying the disclosed invention in a different manner or by modifying the invention within the scope of the disclosure. Accordingly, other objects and a fuller understanding of the invention may be had by referring to the summary of the invention and the detailed description of the preferred embodiment in addition to the scope of the invention defined by the claims taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The above-noted problems, among others, are overcome by the present invention. Briefly stated, the present invention contemplates a pole connector and a detachable sectional pole wherein the pole connector, at one end, is securely insertable into one end of a section of the pole, and another end of the connector has a set of at least three fins protruding from that pole section for removably attaching to a mouth of another pole section. The pole connector may be made of two to four or more segments.

The sectional pole has more than one section, each with a pole connector securably inserted into one end with the other end open and adapted to removably connect to a pole connector protruding from another pole section. The sectional pole has a support member adapted to attach to an external object, maintain approximate vertical stability, and protect the external object from damage while so attached. It also has one or more holding members which are concealable within the sectional pole or removable from the sectional pole and which are adapted to hold external objects thereon.

The foregoing has outlined the more pertinent and important features of the present invention in order that the detailed description of the invention that follows may be better understood so the present contributions to the art may be more fully appreciated. Additional features of the present

invention will be described hereinafter which form the subject of the claims. It should be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the conception and the disclosed specific embodiment may be readily utilized as a basis for modifying or designing other structures and methods for carrying out the same purposes of the present invention. It also should be realized by those skilled in the art that such equivalent constructions and methods do not depart from the spirit and scope of the inventions as set forth in the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a fuller understanding of the nature and objects of the invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the portable sectional pole attached to a chair leg.

FIG. 2 a front elevation partial view of the portable sectional pole, with spacer and protector, attached to a chair leg.

FIG. 3 is an exploded partial view of sections of the portable sectional pole and the connectors.

FIG. 4 is an exploded view of the connector to the portable section pole.

FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional plan view of a four segment pole connector fitted into a section of the portable sectional pole.

FIG. 6 is a detailed plan view of two segments of a four segment pole connector.

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of one embodiment of the support section of the portable sectional pole with attachable spacer and protector.

FIG. 8 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of the support section of the portable sectional pole.

FIG. 9 is a detailed view of the second embodiment of the support section illustrated in FIG. 8.

FIG. 10 is a cut-away view in perspective of a concealable retractable holding member contained within a section of the portable sectional pole.

FIG. 11 is a partial sectional view of a removable holding member on the portable sectional pole.

FIG. 12 is a detailed exploded view of the removable holding member as illustrated in FIG. 11.

FIGS. 13A-13D are sectional views of the concealable retractable holding member shown in FIG. 10 illustrating its operation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to the drawings in detail and in particular to FIG. 1, reference character **10** generally designates a portable sectional pole, with detachable sections **12**, constructed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. As illustrated here, the pole is attached to an external object; the leg of a chair **11**. The vertical plane from the leg up is unobstructed. Attached to such an object, the pole **10** is secured and is approximately vertical (or perpendicular to the ground surface). As shown here, one section of the pole **10** is a support section **14** with flexible strap-like members connected to the support section **14** and wrapped around the leg of the chair **11**.

Another section **16** at the top of the pole **10** shows an extending member **30** projecting therefrom which functions

to hold objects thereon. As will be explained in detail below, this extending member **30** is retractable and concealable within the top section **16**. A slot **46** is configured on a side of a section **12**. This slot **46** may be on all sections **12** of the pole including the top section **16** and the support section **14** and any variations thereof. This slot **46** also may be on one or more sides of each of said sections. This gives the pole **10** greater versatility and flexibility of use. This slot **46** supports another extending member **40** (see FIG. 8) which is removable member which is adapted to hold objects thereon as needs dictate.

FIG. 2 illustrates attachment of the pole **10** to an external object of irregular shape; a chair **111** having arms with arm rests which extend beyond a vertical plane of the chair's leg. The pole **10** is attached to a chair, or similar object of irregular shape, by utilizing a spacer **112** and/or a protector **20** inserted in between the support member **14** and the leg of the chair **111**. The spacer **112** adds distance to the pole's vertical plane in relation to the vertical plane of the object to which attached such that each respective vertical plane is approximately parallel to one another after attachment and the pole **10** is approximately perpendicular to the ground surface. The protector **20** may have a cushion or pad thereon or be made, or consist, of a soft material on one or all sides such that, when it comes into contact with the leg of a chair, the soft material or cushion will serve as a barrier or cushion between the pole **10** and the leg of the chair and prevent damage to the leg of the chair or whatever external object is being used as support for the pole **10**. The protector **20** and the spacer **112** are described in more detail below.

FIGS. 3 and 4 illustrate the pole connector **18** and connection of the pole sections **12** to one another (unless otherwise indicated, hereinafter this type of connection also includes connecting the top section **16** and the support section **14** and its secondary embodiment). The connector **18** is unique in that it provides greater structural integrity to the pole **10** after the sections **12** are connected to another than any other pole connectors previously seen or used for this purpose. Each pole section **12**, **14**, **16** has a mouth **19** at each end. A pole connector **18** is inserted into the mouth **19** of one end leaving the mouth at the other end open to receive and join with another section which contains the pole connector **18**. As shown in these figures, the pole connector **18** has four fins, though three (or more) fins serve the same function particularly in those instances where the sections **12**, **14**, **16** are somewhat curvilinearly shaped. Four fins is best for poles having four or more sides.

The connector **18** generally may be made up of two to four segments or more. As illustrated in FIG. 4, the connector **18** is comprised of four segments with segments **81** and **82** being paired and segments **83** and **84** being paired. Each segment has a longitudinal slot **17** beginning at one end and terminating at approximately midpoint of the segment. After the four segments are paired, and with the two longitudinal slots as a guide, the two paired segments **81**, **82** and **83**, **84** are joined together forming the pole connector **18**.

FIGS. 5 and 6 illustrate the detailed structure of the four segments. The ends **85** each segment are beveled and the outer surfaces (or exposed surfaces) of the pair segments are curvilinear. The function of the bevel is to seat the segments securely onto the inner surface of the section **12**. The function of the curvature is to create a bias or force against the inner surface of the section. The angle of the bevel may range from about 1° to about 9°. For best results, the angle of the bevel should be about 2°. When the segments are paired, their outer or exposed surfaces are concave leaving a gap at the respective ends **85**. The paired segments are

joined at their respective slots **17** to thereby form a fin-like structure which inserts into the mouth **19** of any section **12**. When two segments are used for the connector **18**, no gap exists in the connector structure.

The pole connector **18** is also structured such that one end, referred to as an insert, has an external 'perimeter' substantially equal to the internal perimeter of the mouth **19** of a section **12** for securely mating with that section. Another end of the pole connector **18** is structured such that the other end has an external 'perimeter' approximately equal to the internal perimeter of the mouth **19** of a section **12** for removably mating with that section. In other words, the insert end of the pole connector **18** securely seats into the mouth **19** of a section **12**, the other end projects from the mouth for removably mating with an open mouth **19** of another section **12**.

Generally, the insert end should seat into the section **12** about two to about three inches, and the projecting end should project from the section about two to about three inches. This gives the pole **10** its ideal structural integrity. The insert end of the pole connector **18** also may be permanently affixed to a section. The insert end of the pole connector **18** may be a fin-like structure as above described or may be a solid structure.

FIG. 7 illustrates in detail the support member **14** shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. As shown in FIG. 7, one or more flexible straps **22** containing suitable fasteners, are connected to the support member **14**. The fasteners on the flexible straps **22** may be any fastener suitable for the intended purpose including, but not limited to, hook-and-loop, snap tabs, and hook-and-eye. Hook-and-loop type fasteners are best and are illustrated. One element of the hook-and-loop is on one side of the strap **22** and the other element of the hook-and-loop is on the other side of the strap **22**. To function as intended, it is not important which element is on which side. What is important is that cooperating fastening elements are on opposite sides of the strap **22** for as the strap **22** is wrapped around an external object, the opposite side communicates with the other side and fastens thereto.

On one side of the support member **14** are at least two apertures or receiving members **28** for registering and receiving a spacer member **112** or a protector member **20**. A spacer member **112** is a member used to increase the base width of the support member **14** when the support member **14** alone, when attached to an external object, is not approximately vertical to the ground. It adds distance to the support member **14** so that it may stand approximately perpendicular to the ground surface as illustrated in FIG. 2. The spacer member **112** may come in varying widths to accommodate the varying gaps to be encountered in use. Like the support member **14**, each spacer member **112** has at least two receiving members **28** on one side. Each spacer member **112** also has at least two connecting units **29** (not shown on spacer **112** but shown on protector member **20**). The connecting units **29** may be a ball-like head having a shank which is connected to one side of the spacer member **112**. The connecting units **29** are structured to register with the receiving member **28** on the support member **14** (apertures in this embodiment).

The protector member **20** also has connecting units **29** structured to register with the receiving member **28** of the spacer member **112** and, consequently, the receiving member **28** of the support member **14** in those situations where a spacer member **112** is not needed for vertical alignment. The protector member **20** may be made of a soft or cushion-like material or have a cushion or pad **21** on its outer surface.

The purpose of the protector member **20** is to prevent damage to the external objects as the pole **10** is attached and secured thereto. An end cap **13** may be placed over an exposed mouth of any section **12**, **14**, **16**, and **112**.

FIGS. 8 and 9 illustrate another embodiment of a support member **24** for the pole **10**. This is a free-standing support member which has a approximately rigid base and does not require an external object. FIG. 9 illustrates this support member in detail. This support member **24** has a center with a mouth for receiving a section **12** therein. It has three or more approximately horizontal legs which extend outward. For greater portability, these horizontal legs may merely consist of short stubs each of which have mouths for receiving sections therein to provide support for the rigid base member **24** and the pole **10**.

FIGS. 10-13 illustrate the holding members of this pole **10**. Turning first to FIGS. 11 and 12, each section **12** may have one or more slots **46** therein. These slots **46** are structured to receive and retain a first extending member **40**. The first extending member **40** is adapted to hold containers thereon as needed by a user. The first extending member **40** has a tab **44** to its rear, a leg **45** adjacent to the tab **44**, and a slit **42** in between the tab **44** and the leg **45**. The first extending member **40** connects to the pole **10** by insertion into the slot **46** tab-end first. The width of the tab **44** is approximately equal in dimension to the inner surface of the section **12** from the slot-side (slot **46**) to its opposite wall. The width of the slit **42** is approximately equal in dimension to the thickness of the front wall of the section **12**.

After insertion of the first extending member **40**, in the direction of Arrow A, to approximately the rear of the inside surface of the section **12**, the first extending member **40** is then moved downward in the direction of Arrow B until the slit **42** rests on the bottom of the slot **46** on the front side of that section **12**. With the rear of the tab **42** adjacent to the rear inner wall surface of the section **12**, the slit **42** securely resting in the bottom of the slot **46**, and the leg **45** adjacent to the front outer surface of the section **12**, the first extending member **40** is securely, but removably, in place.

FIG. 10 illustrates a second holding member which is retractable and concealable in the top section **16**. The top section **16** has a second slot **36** on a side of the top section **16**. A pin **38**, approximately perpendicularly disposed in relation to the second slot **36**, is connected to two opposing sides of the top section **16**; these opposing sides are adjacent to the side bearing the second slot **36**. On the top section **16**, on a side opposite of the side which bears the second slot **16**, is a third slot **26**. A second extending arm **30** is held by the pin **38** and is pivotable into and out of the second slot **36**, and is translatable into and out of the third slot **26** when extended.

Adjacent to the rear of the second extending arm **30** is a notch **32**. Forward of the notch **32** is a channel **34**. The channel **34** is the structure which holds the second extending arm **30** in the pin **38**. The notch **32** seats into the third slot **26** and thereby maintains the second extending arm **30** in place and prevents it from translating forward, rearward, or downward. The operation of the second extending arm **30** is best illustrated in FIGS. 13A-13D.

In FIG. 13A, the second extending arm **30** is at rest and in place, concealed within the top section **16**. To pivot the second extending arm **30** into its holding position it is first pivoted in the direction of Arrows C out of its resting place. Then, as shown in FIG. 13B, it is moved downward within the channel **34** in the direction of Arrow D, followed by an upward movement in the direction of Arrow E until it is

approximately parallel with the ground surface. Its position at this stage is that illustrated in FIG. 13C. It is then moved rearward in the direction of Arrow F and toward the third slot 26. The pin 38 and the channel 34 cooperate and guide this movement. When the notch 32 is aligned with the third slot 26, the second extending arm 30 is moved in the direction of Arrow G. After the notch 32 seats into the top of the third slot 26, the second extending arm 30 has been set and is capable of bearing weight. After a user completes his health-care regimen, the second extending arm 30 is easily released and pivoted and concealed back into the cavity of the top section.

The present disclosure includes that contained in the present claims as well as that of the foregoing description. Although this invention has been described in its preferred forms with a certain degree of particularity, it is understood that the present disclosure of the preferred form has been made only by way of example and numerous changes in the details of construction and combination and arrangement of parts may be resorted to without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, the scope of the invention should be determined not by the embodiments illustrated, but by the appended claims and their legal equivalents.

The invention claimed is:

1. A pole connector for detachable sectional poles of the type having pole sections with each said pole section having at least two ends and a mouth at each of said at least two ends, each mouth further having an internal perimeter thereat, said pole connector comprising:

- a. a first set of at least three fins having an external perimeter on one end which is adapted to be approximately equal to the internal perimeter of the mouth of one pole section into which said first set of at least three fins is removably attachable, said fins having an outer edge adjacent to said external perimeters, said outer edge being compressibly split; and
- b. an insert member having an external perimeter on the other end of said at least three fins which is adapted to be substantially equal to the internal perimeter of the mouth of another pole section into which said insert member is securably attachable;

whereby when one said pole section is inserted into the first set of at least three fins of said pole connector, the outer edges of said at least three fins compress thereby exerting outward pressure on the pole section and thereby holding the pole section more firmly onto said pole connector.

2. The pole connector as defined in claim 1 wherein said insert member comprises a second set of at least three fins.

3. The pole connector as defined in claim 2 wherein said second set of at least three fins further have an outer edge adjacent to its perimeter, said outer edge being compressibly split.

4. A portable sectionally detachable pole comprising:

- a. a plurality of sections, each of said plurality of sections having a first end and a second end and further having a mouth at each said end; and
- b. connector means for connecting any one of said plurality of sections to any other one of said plurality of sections; said connector means comprising a first set of at least three fins having an external perimeter approximately equal to an internal perimeter of a mouth of one section, said first set of at least three fins removably attachable to said mouth of said one section, said fins

having an outer edge adjacent to said external perimeters, said outer edge being compressibly split, and an insert member having an external perimeter substantially equal to an internal perimeter of a mouth of another section, said insert member connected to said first set of at least three fins and securably attachable to said mouth of said another section whereby when one said section is inserted into the first set of at least three fins of said pole connector, the outer edges of said at least three fins compress thereby exerting outward pressure on the section and thereby holding the section more firmly onto said pole connector.

5. The pole as defined in claim 4 further comprising a support means for supporting said pole, said support means located on any one of said plurality of sections.

6. The pole as defined in claim 5 wherein said support means comprises at least one flexible member adapted to securably engage an external structure and thereby support said pole.

7. The pole as defined in claim 5 wherein said support means comprises a strap-like member having a first side and a second side and further having cooperating fastening means on each of said sides for securably engaging said first side to said second side.

8. The pole as defined in claim 7 wherein said fastening means comprises hook-and-loop fasteners.

9. The pole as defined in claim 5 wherein said support means comprises a rigid base member attachable to any one of said plurality of sections, said rigid base member having a center and plurality of horizontal legs extending from said center.

10. The pole as defined in claim 5 further comprising a spacer member insertable adjacent to said support means for establishing an approximately vertical alignment of said pole.

11. The pole as defined in claim 5 further comprising a protector member insertable adjacent to said support means for establishing a protective barrier between said support means and an external object to which said pole is attached.

12. The pole as defined in claim 4 further comprising a holding means for holding objects thereon, said holding means connectable to any one of said plurality of sections.

13. The pole as defined in claim 12 wherein said holding means comprises a first slot in said one of said plurality of sections and an extending member in said one of said plurality of sections whereby said first extending member is detachably securable in said first slot of said one of said plurality of sections.

14. The pole as defined in claim 4 further comprising a second holding means for holding objects thereon, said second holding means connected to any one of said plurality of sections.

15. The pole as defined in claim 14 wherein said second holding means comprises a second slot in said one of said plurality of sections and a second extending member in said one of said plurality of sections whereby said second extending member is pivotable in and out of said one of said plurality of sections and is securely retainable in said second slot.

16. The pole as defined in claim 4 wherein said second set of at least three fins further have an outer edge adjacent to its perimeter, said outer edge being compressibly split.